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Security Council

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Monday, 17 March 2014, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Lucas	(Luxembourg)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Oyarzábal
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Chad	Mr. Mangaral
	Chile	Mr. Errázuriz
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Bertoux
	Jordan	Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Nigeria	Mr. Laro
	Republic of Korea	Ms. Paik Ji-ah
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Rwanda	Mr. Manzi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-Geneal on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2014/163)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2014/163)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Canada, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, Pakistan, Slovakia, Sweden and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2014/184, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Australia.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2014/163, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kubiš.

Mr. Kubiš: Khanjar Wabel Abdallah of Lebanon, Basra Hassan of the United States and of Somali origin, Nasreen Khan of Pakistan and Vadim Nazarov of the Russian Federation are four members of the United Nations family who were brutally murdered in January. They died, along with 17 other Afghan and international civilians, in a suicide assault in Kabul city. I offer my deepest condolences to their families in recognizing the sacrifice of those dedicated international civil servants.

In less than three weeks' time, Afghanistan intends to hold presidential and provincial council elections, which will effect the country's first democratic transfer of power. Leadership and commitment remain critical to the holding of that historic event. In underscoring a stable political dispensation, those elections are a defining moment that will earn President Hâmid Karzai a place in history.

I urge all eligible Afghan citizens — men and women — to exercise their franchise on 5 April. I urge them to not let spoilers and terrorists deprive them of their choice or of their future. Participation as voters, elections officials and observers is a rejection of force, violence and intimidation as the means by which their proud nation decides its leadership. At this delicate juncture in Afghanistan's transitions, it is a credible electoral transition that can provide much-needed stability and predictability through a popular mandate across ethnic lines for broader political, economic and social development agendas, including peace and reconciliation.

Technical preparations for what is an Afghan-managed and Afghan-led electoral process remain on track and are of a better quality than previously, including in fraud prevention and mitigation.

In addition to the electoral authorities, the responsibility for peaceful and credible polls largely rests with political leaders, candidates and their supporters. I urge all candidates to guide and shape the actions and attitudes of their supporters with serious public commitment to opposing fraud committed in their name. Where there are alleged electoral violations, complainants should seek immediate redress through institutional means.

Elections will necessarily have losers, but, in particular in the current conditions in Afghanistan, they should not be a winner-takes-all contest. While in no way replacing the people's voice at the polls, I urge candidates to come to the understanding that not being the winner is not prima facie evidence of fraud. Threats of civil disobedience over alleged fraud now, weeks before the elections, or the resort to civil disruption only increase tensions and create confusion.

Security will have a major impact on the polls. To date, election-related violence has been of a lower order than in 2009 or 2010, even as general security incidents have increased. However, even election violence is on the rise.

I welcome the support for the electoral process expressed by parts of the insurgency, notably Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's armed wing of Hezb-e Islami. However, I want to make very clear that even groups such as the Taliban that reject the elections have an obligation to respect a civilian process. I am gravely disturbed by the Taliban's recent declaration that it will seek to disrupt the process by force, unleashing a campaign of terror. Voters, electoral workers, candidates and observers are all civilians. Targeting civilians or carrying out indiscriminate attacks on polling centres and other civilian locations undermine any claims to legitimate political status and are acts punishable under international law.

I bear with me, for the Secretary-General, a message signed by a quarter of a million Afghan women in support of peace. I commend the organizers and petitioners who have raised their voice — the voices of the majority of Afghans. These women demand only the chance for a secure future for their families. It is a message of hope and resilience amid the misery and death inflicted by terrorism, extremism, transnational criminal networks and local power-holders.

A breakthrough in direct talks between Afghan authorities and the Taliban remains elusive thus far, despite some interesting recent initiatives by the High Peace Council. Efforts to build understanding and agree on frameworks must continue while patiently building an environment conducive to later, more formal efforts, in which the United Nations should, and will, have a more prominent role.

Afghanistan's ultimate stability and sustainability lies in the region. As other international actors draw down, I am pleased to see neighbouring countries and regional powers recognizing the need for active engagement in support of Afghan solutions. There is a realization that a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan is ultimately in the self-interest of all.

I am pleased to note continued practical progress being made under the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan. Peace and stability in Afghanistan will not be sustainable without economic and social transitions assisted by donors meeting their commitments in the years to come. At January's special Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board meeting, in which all 11 presidential candidates participated, representatives of 50 Member States underscored their continuing support for Afghanistan. The levels of international assistance pledged remains truly exceptional, while remaining dependent on successful political transition and demonstrable progress in Government commitments to governance, reforms, economic sustainability and a rights-based agenda.

I welcome assurances by the presidential candidates of their commitment to sustaining and accelerating momentum under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. There are risks, but there are even more opportunities in returning to a more normalized development agenda. In looking forward to the ministerial-level development conference with the new Government later this year, it cannot be business as usual. Strengthening employment, generating licit economic activity and undercutting the burgeoning illicit economy should be central to all development approaches.

Narcotics production and trafficking undermine the well-being of the population, economy and institutions of Afghanistan and the wider region and increasingly contribute to the financing of terrorism. A shared long-term strategy, high-level leadership and genuine political will are required of both the Government and the international community.

Sustaining the gains Afghanistan has made in human rights over the past decade and, in particular, the rights of women and children is not a luxury and must not be sacrificed to short-term political expediency. Justice, good governance, the rule of law and human rights are crucial elements of lasting peace, equitable development and human security.

I welcome the Government's commitment to ending child recruitment by 2016, which requires that implementation of the action plan on underage recruitment be expedited.

As the new United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) mandate is renewed, I again stress the United Nations' long-term commitment to a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan. Given the current elements of uncertainty, interlocutors almost unanimously stress the continuity and value that UNAMA brings in the exercise of good offices, the protection and promotion of human rights and the facilitation of international development coherence. The Mission's national footprint continues to be an invaluable asset in undertaking mandated elections, outreach and human rights activities. Indeed, as

other international institutions and Member States reduce their sub-national presence, the international community is increasingly seeking our support in understanding and accessing a diverse country. All that work in implementing our complex mandate requires adequate and predictable resources.

In highlighting progress and positive momentum, I emphasize that gains are fragile. Yet Afghanistan is not poised atop an inevitable post-2014 abyss, as some doomsayers have predicted. What is needed in such a period of unpredictability is the smooth and timely transfer of political power. The success of the April 2014 elections will be of critical significance in reinforcing Afghanistan's institutional and political stability and instilling confidence in the future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Kubiš for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): I thank you, Madam President, for your able leadership of the Council this month. My thanks also go to our friend Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his briefing and for his skilful leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We convey our gratitude to Australia and Ambassador Quinlan for his country's committed work as the penholder in the Council on Afghanistan and for the spirit of cooperation shown during the course of negotiations on the UNAMA draft resolution (S/2014/184). I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the recent Secretary-General's report on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2014/163).

On 28 March 2002, in the wake of the Bonn Conference, the Council voted on resolution 1401 (2002), on the establishment of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan — a political mission to lead international civilian coordination efforts and to support Afghanistan in building a democratic, stable and peaceful country. Since then, its comprehensive focus on security, the economy, governance and development challenges has been essential to my Government's work to lay the foundations for sustainable development and peace in the country, and the UNAMA mandate has been renewed regularly with the full support of the Government of Afghanistan.

Throughout the past decade, UNAMA has remained at the centre of international engagement in support of Afghanistan, an engagement characterized by the involvement of more than 70 countries and dozens of international organizations, known as the donor community. The international community's collective efforts have spanned all dimensions, and our achievements attained through shared efforts have been exceptional. The country is more unified, millions of boys and girls are in school, more Afghans have access to health care than ever before and all Afghans enjoy their fundamental human rights as guaranteed by our Constitution.

We reached the final stage of transition this year, as the country began to stand on its own feet and take charge of its own destiny. Afghan National Security Forces assumed full security responsibility nationwide, showing even more capability and professionalism as international forces draw down. The Government began to renew its international partnerships while asserting greater Afghan ownership and leadership over the country's future. And now, after 12 years of unprecedented international cooperation and engagement, the Afghan people are less than a few weeks away from the pinnacle of transition, that is, presidential and provincial elections.

On 5 April, Afghans will cast their votes to choose the future leader of the country and their provincial representatives. That will be a historic event, marking the first peaceful transition of power through a democratic process. Moreover, a legitimate political transition is essential to our efforts to secure a brighter and more peaceful future. After decades of war, Afghans have worked intently to build a new foundation for progress in Afghanistan. Elections represent the hope that the work will continue and provide an opportunity for its advancement throughout the transformation decade.

Election preparations have been long under way, with the help of the international community and the United Nations. It is crucial that the elections be legitimate, credible and transparent, as expected by all. To that end, the Independent Election Commission is in the lead in administering, adjudicating and managing the polls and in overseeing logistical and technical preparations, with the support of our international partners. The Independent Electoral Complaints Commission is well positioned to prevent fraud and misconduct. Furthermore, the Ministry of the Interior has intensified efforts to ensure security on election

day, preparing 400,000 Afghan security forces to protect the 7,168 polling stations on 5 April, with plans to deploy 13,000 female polling station searchers and provide security to the 308 female provincial council candidates. The number of international and national observers will be in the thousands.

The participation of Afghans in the lead-up to the elections has been monumental. All segments of society are deeply involved in the elections, many of them for the first time, keenly participating to ensure they have a say over the country's future. Importantly, women are involved in the elections as candidates, campaigners, electoral workers and voters. Today, of the 3.4 million new voters registered for the April election, 35 per cent are women. Additionally, presidential candidates have had historical media exposure, particularly through a number of televised debates, allowing candidates the opportunity to present their programmes to the electorate and enhancing countrywide involvement in the political process. That sets a new precedent for our young democracy.

With all Afghans focused keenly on the elections, we have not lost sight of the challenges facing us this year. That is crucial to the preservation of the gains of the past decade and to a successful departure towards the transformation decade. To address those challenges, a serious focus is needed on the following three main areas.

The first area is Afghanistan's continuing cooperation with the international community. That is essential to a successful transition this year, to the transformation decade ahead and to long-term peace, security and development in the country. As demonstrated by the consultative Loya Jirga of November 2013, the Afghan people believe in the importance of continuing strategic relations with the United States, NATO and the wider international community. To that end, we are certain that the bilateral security agreement with the United States will be signed soon.

The second aspect is fiscal stability and the sustainable economic growth and development of Afghanistan. We welcome the progress made towards fulfilling the commitments set out in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, which is essential to the country's long-term stability and sustainability. In addition to that Framework, the Government continues to further the agreements reached at the London, Kabul, Bonn and Tokyo Conferences and the Lisbon and Chicago Summits, which aim to enhance national leadership and ownership and Afghanistan's economic self-sufficiency strategy.

The third element is regional cooperation. As we move towards the end of the transition this year, it is fundamental to Afghanistan's stability that its neighbours and countries in the region play their role in contributing to peace and security in the country. It is clear that the prosperity and security of all countries in the region are deeply interlinked. My Government therefore continues to strengthen regional cooperation networks through multilateral processes, such as the Istanbul Process, as well as bilateral efforts. Regional cooperation is also essential to peace and reconciliation, as well as related outreach to the Taliban and other groups that continue to fight against the Government.

Throughout all the that, protecting the rights of all Afghans remains a fundamental priority. That includes ensuring the right of all Afghan people to good governance, justice, health care and education and to live free from violence. In that regard, Afghanistan is committed to preventing and mitigating the toll of violence on civilians, particularly women and children. We condemn in the strongest terms the continuing violence against the Afghan people, including women and children, by extremists. With elections presenting an opportunity for all Afghans to come together in unity, the impetus for the armed opposition to reject its brutal tactics, contribute meaningfully to the country and heed the call for peace have never been stronger than today.

As we renew the mandate of UNAMA for another year, we are well aware of the continuing importance of the role of the United Nations as a whole at this crucial time for the country. We expect the international community to stand firmly for peace and security in Afghanistan and to further our work to ensure that the hard-won achievements of the past decade are protected. After decades of war and instability and 12 years of tremendous progress, it is crucial that the momentum continue towards our goal of achieving a long-lasting, stable, peaceful and democratic Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in French*): It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Argentina, Australia, Chad, Chile, China, France, Jordan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Nigeria, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Rwanda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America

The President (*spoke in French*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2145 (2014).

I shall now give the floor to members of the Council.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I thank Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his briefing this morning and for his leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I also thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement and his close engagement in the Council's work on Afghanistan.

I also want to recognize the dedication and efforts of all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan. The death of four United Nations staff, as well as Afghan and international civilians, in the attack of 17 January on the Taverna restaurant in Kabul was a reminder of the risks faced by civilians in Afghanistan, including United Nations and other international staff. The Council condemned that attack in the strongest terms, and I reiterate our condolences to the families, friends and colleagues of those involved.

Resolution 2145 (2014), which we have just adopted, is a firm statement of the international community's continuing commitment to Afghanistan and its people. The resolution provides the right mandate to ensure that the United Nations can continue to support Afghanistan during the completion of security transition. This 12-month renewal preserves UNAMA's core mandate, ensuring continuity in UNAMA's support for Afghan-led efforts to strengthen governance and build capacity.

As we know, 2014 is a pivotal year for Afghanistan, with the Government assuming full responsibility for security as well as the management of political transition, which is as critical to Afghanistan's transformation as the continuing security, stabilization and reconstruction efforts.

The international community will be closely watching the presidential and provincial council elections early next month. They constitute a historic moment for Afghanistan's transition. An inclusive, transparent and credible presidential election process is necessary.

Australia welcomes the United Nations role in supporting the elections and encourages the Afghan Government to continue to work with the United Nations in order to strengthen the sustainability, integrity and inclusiveness of the electoral process. We encourage continued efforts to ensure that women are able to safely exercise their right to vote and to participate in the process. Their participation will be a decisive measure of the representativeness and success of the elections. It is also essential that the Independent Election Commission and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission be enabled to fulfil their critical roles.

Beyond the elections, we look to a new Afghan Government to address key political, governance and security challenges, with the support of the United Nations. The leadership and considered decisions of the new Government will be the key determinant of the international community's support for Afghanistan post-2014.

The 2012 Tokyo Conference saw an unprecedented level of resources pledged to Afghanistan. Progress against Afghanistan's commitments by a new Afghan Government, as well as by the international community, is necessary to support sustainable economic and social development in Afghanistan. Of particular importance will be progress by the Afghan Government to improve governance and the rule of law, including transitional justice, budget execution, combating corruption and improving accountability.

On human rights, Afghanistan needs to be vigilant in building on the gains of the past decade, particularly in relation to the rights of women and girls. Today's resolution reaffirms that message. We continue to urge the full implementation of the law on elimination of violence against women and to encourage the Afghan Government to finalize and implement a national action plan on women and peace and security so as to support the active participation of women in the peace and reconciliation process.

We remain concerned about the increasing number of civilians killed and wounded in conflict, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/163). That includes development and humanitarian workers. We support further sustained efforts by Afghanistan to track civilian casualties.

We also encourage the Afghan authorities to provide full support to the Afghanistan Independent Human

Rights Commission so that it can fulfil its necessary role as an effective and independent institution.

The Afghan Government must send a strong message to the international community about its commitment to security over the long term. Security challenges limit the international community's ability to provide effective support. The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) has demonstrated its capability in fighting the insurgency and providing security for the Afghan people, but it must continue to expand security across Afghanistan. Australia will continue to support the ANSF, through our sustainment commitment, agreed in Chicago in 2012, and through the continued presence of Australian military personnel in training and advisory roles.

We continue to encourage Afghanistan to sign the bilateral security agreement with the United States and to conclude NATO status-of-forces agreement negotiations as soon as possible to provide the legal basis for the post-2014 mission and to enable planning for a post-2014 military presence to proceed.

In conclusion, Australia, along with the United Nations and international community, will continue to support Afghanistan at the national level. But reform and progress are naturally the responsibility of the Afghan Government and people. Leadership by the Afghan Government will be critical in meeting the security, political and economic challenges in 2014 and beyond transition.

Ms. Paik Ji-ah (Republic of Korea): I thank Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his informative briefing. I appreciate the dedication he has shown in implementing his mandate and commend the continued resilience of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I also thank Ambassador Tanin for his remarks.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express our deep condolences for the loss of United Nations and other international staff members in the attack on a restaurant in Kabul in January.

Afghanistan has achieved considerable progress in its political, security and economic transition over the past decade. The final year of transition is critical in making that progress sustainable and irreversible. In that vein, I would like to touch upon three main areas where more effort is required to facilitate a peaceful transition and lasting development in Afghanistan.

First, the presidential and provincial council elections scheduled for 5 April will be a significant milestone in Afghanistan's political transition. We welcome the electoral preparations made by the Afghan Government, including the mobilization of observers for the presidential elections and the security assessment of polling centres. Given the growing attacks from a number of groups, including the Taliban, security for electoral personnel and voters must be ensured. It is also important that any incitement to defamation and violence not be tolerated, with a view to safeguarding the integrity of the electoral process.

Secondly, with regard to the security situation, while we welcome the ongoing efforts to strengthen the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces and police, the growing number of security incidents demonstrates that grave security challenges remain. In particular, we strongly condemn indiscriminate attacks on civilians and humanitarian personnel. We reiterate that all parties must take every feasible step to comply with their obligations under international law. The ongoing support of the international community in strengthening Afghan security capacity and enhancing cross-border cooperation are crucial to the improvement of the overall security situation.

Thirdly, as noted at the special meeting of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board in Kabul in January, the Afghan Government should continue to implement the key commitments of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. In particular, the Government needs to reinforce its efforts to tackle corruption and the illicit economy.

We also urge the Afghan Government to make additional efforts in partnership with the United Nations for the protection of women and children. The law on the elimination of violence against women should be fully implemented to end impunity for violence against women. It is also necessary to support the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission in assuming its full functions.

In conclusion, in facing the final year of transition, the sustained support of the international community remains essential for the improvement of predictability and confidence in Afghanistan. We appreciate UNAMA's contribution to stability and development in Afghanistan and fully support resolution 2145 (2014), on the extension of its mandate.

Mr. Oyarzábal (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Representative Ján Kubiš for introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2014/163), as well as the representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Tanin, for sharing with the Security Council the vision and priorities of his Government, which are essential to our work.

Today Afghanistan is preparing for the 5 April elections, which the Secretary-General rightly considers to be a landmark event, as they will be the first transfer of power in Afghanistan from one president-elect to another. Argentina wishes to express to the people and the Government of Afghanistan its desire that the presidential and provincial elections will allow the country to consolidate its political transition, which will form the basis for strengthening its stability, reinforcing its national unity and promoting its sustainable development in an equitable manner.

In order for the political transition to be legitimate, the elections of 5 April must be transparent, inclusive and credible. The role of the United Nations in providing technical support and in facilitating coherence in international support for the electoral process, including international observers, is certainly important. But it is the Afghans themselves who have the primary responsibility for making the electoral process complete and inclusive and for making the results truly representative. In that context, the responsibility incumbent upon electoral officials is clear, as it is on the candidates and their followers to comply with the electoral laws and accept the results from the polls, channelling their complaints through the institutions established for that purpose. Fundamentally, it is necessary that the qualified Afghan citizens come together en masse to vote in order to ensure the representativeness of the elections and the elected authorities that result therefrom.

The participation of women as voters, candidates and elected officials is crucial. We are concerned about the disqualification of candidates by the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission on the basis of education, not least because such decisions principally affect women. The number of women on the Commission, which represents less than 8 per cent of the Commission as a whole, in a country where the female population is larger than the male population, is insufficient, although we recognize the efforts undertaken to increase the participation of women.

Finally, citizens should exercise their rights in a safe environment, not only in Kabul but also in the interior of the country. Security will be critical to ensuring that voters trust that they can express their will. The challenges in that regard cannot be underestimated.

The challenges that the authorities elected in the 5 April elections will face are both known and overwhelming. They include achieving the generalized desire for peace of the Afghan people through the realization of agreements that prevent or mitigate in the short term the growing cost in lives of civilians as a result of the complex conflict affecting the country. In that context, a peace process or direct talks among the Government of Afghanistan and the principal armed opposition groups is essential, as is continuing to strengthen bilateral ties between Afghanistan and countries of the region at a time when the international community is reducing its presence in the country. There is no substitute for meaningful discussions that include the Taliban and other insurgent groups to bring an end to the spiral of violence that continues to bloody Afghanistan, as is seen in the number of attacks that took place in 2013 — the second highest number in terms of levels of violence since the fall of the Taliban regime.

A modern, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan depends in large measure on the success of the reconciliation process in the framework of a comprehensive strategy for the protection and promotion of human rights and access to education, health care and employment for all Afghans. In that respect, prioritized efforts should focus on the acceleration and consolidation of Afghanistan's progress on human rights since 2001. It is the absolute responsibility of the Government of Afghanistan to ensure the full implementation of the law on the elimination of violence against women and that perpetrators of violence, particularly against women, are held accountable for their actions.

It is no surprise that a country with the human, cultural and natural resources of Afghanistan is considered one of the least developed countries in the world, when its security sector demands nearly 50 per cent of its annual budget. In that context, the implementation of the Kabul process and the coordination of development assistance remain essential. It is important that the international community continue to provide for the 5.4 million Afghans lacking access to health care and the 2.2 million facing food insecurity.

Argentina voted in favour of resolution 2145 (2014) because it believes that the role of the United Nations will remain equally critical in the election process, in assisting the future Government to coordinate international aid, in good offices and the peace process, as well as in human rights and humanitarian assistance and economic and social development in the long term.

Mr. Manzi (Rwanda): I wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his comprehensive briefing. His self-motivated leadership and the effective role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) have contributed to the stabilization of Afghanistan. We fully support the dedicated work of the Special Representative and his staff. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his statement.

In less than one month, Afghans will decide their future leadership through the electoral process scheduled to take place on 5 April. The elections will become an important milestone for Afghans, the region and the international community as a whole. We welcome the progress made in the process of organizing the elections. We encourage all parties to take ownership of the electoral process, supported by the United Nations and other partners, and expect the elections to be held in an inclusive, transparent and peaceful atmosphere.

As we take note of the Government's efforts to try to create a secure environment in which the people of Afghanistan can live without fear of terrorism and violence, following the transfer of security responsibilities to Afghan security forces in June 2013, we remain concerned, as highlighted by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2014/163), of the increased security incidents in the country ahead of the presidential elections. We condemn those cowardly acts of violence mainly targeting international staff and innocent civilians, especially the recent attack that took the lives of four United Nations personnel and 17 Afghans. Our condolences go to the families and Governments of the victims. We appeal to the international community to continue supporting and strengthening the capacities of the Afghan forces to enable them to deal with the security challenges the country faces. Support to the Afghan security forces will become vital after the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force. We hope that modalities for further cooperation between NATO and Afghanistan will be positively defined in months ahead.

On the political process, Rwanda supports an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned national reconciliation process, with a view to achieving sustainable peace and stability in the country and in the region as a whole. We express our strong support to the active role played by the High Peace Council in promoting national reconciliation efforts. We hope that the international community will support and work with the Afghanistan Government and people in their efforts to create an enabling environment for the reconciliation process. The extension of the UNAMA mandate today is again another expression of the support and confidence of the Council for Afghanistan's transitional political process. UNAMA will continue to play a central role in assisting Afghanistan as it moves forward in its transition process.

On the pledges made to support Afghanistan, it is important, as declared in Tokyo and in Chicago, for the international community to remain engaged in serious long-term partnerships with Afghanistan, by supporting its efforts through the transitional phase and beyond 2014. Even as progress is being reviewed under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework to address key challenges, pledges and commitments of assistance to Afghanistan must be honoured.

On drug trafficking and use, the opium production in Afghanistan in 2013 increased by 36 per cent as compared to the figures of 2012. It poses a serious threat to the health and well-being of the population, the economy of the region and the entire international community. Opium plays a key role in financing insurgency, hence causing instability in the country and the region. All preventive measures put in place have not yielded any tangible results. We strongly believe that it is the responsibility of everyone, especially the Afghan Government, regional countries and the entire international community to prevent narcotics trafficking and the resulting earnings that sponsor insurgents and acts of terrorism.

In conclusion, Rwanda stresses its firm belief that a sincere and inclusive Afghan-led political process will lead to sustainable stability, peace and development. Challenges will continue to exist, but the international community must remain united by the side of the Afghan Government in seeking a durable solution to terrorism and extremism.

Mr. Laro (Nigeria): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kubiš for his update and Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

I would like to comment on two aspects of the situation in Afghanistan, that is, political developments and the security situation.

On political developments, we are pleased to note that preparations for the elections of 5 April remain on track and that vigorous political activity can be observed across the country, including large-scale rallies. The recent pronouncement by President Karzai that the Government would not interfere in the April elections is commendable. That commitment by the Government is particularly significant as the elections will mark the first time since 2001 that there is a democratic transfer of power from one president to another. We also applaud the use of televised debates in the campaign, as it will allow candidates to get their message across to a broad spectrum of the Afghan public.

We are deeply concerned by reports of threats against campaign workers and election officials. We are also concerned by the reported assassination attempts and killings linked to the elections. We are, however, encouraged to note that politically motivated violence has so far not constituted a strategic threat to the elections.

The risk assessment of the 7,168 polling units conducted by the Government, which certifies that Afghan security forces could secure 94 per cent of the units, is also encouraging. We strongly urge all the citizens of Afghanistan to shun violence in the run-up to the elections.

With regard to security, we note that, although the situation remains volatile, Afghan security forces have proven capable of defending territory from attacks by anti-Government elements. We regret that this is at the cost of significant casualties. We also note with concern that the reporting period saw an unprecedented number of suicide attacks, killings and other criminal acts that had a negative impact on both the people of Afghanistan and the ability of the United Nations to undertake mandated tasks and activities. In that regard, we strongly condemn the coordinated attack of 17 January on a Kabul restaurant in which a number of civilians, including four United Nations officials, lost their lives. An attack on United Nations officials is an attack on the international community.

We welcome the cooperation between the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in developing a strategy for the disposal of explosive remnants of war from military bases, firing and demolition ranges and other sites across the country. In 2013, 5 per cent of civilian deaths in conflict in Afghanistan resulted from explosive remnants of war. We therefore see their disposal as vital to reducing the number of civilian deaths in the conflict.

As ISAF prepares to leave Afghanistan at the end of 2014, we encourage the Afghan Government to continue to engage with all regional and international partners in order to ensure that a security vacuum is not created that could be exploited by anti-Government elements.

We welcome the adoption of resolution 2145 (2014), which will enable UNAMA and the Government of Afghanistan to consolidate the gains made in the country in recent times.

Finally, Nigeria is hopeful that in the near future we shall see a stable, peaceful, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan where the human rights of all its citizens are promoted and protected.

Mr. Bertoux (France) (*spoke in French*): I welcome the presence of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš in the Chamber and I thank him for his briefing and his work at the head of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Through the Special Representative, I would like to commend the efforts of the international and local Mission staff, who work in complex conditions and, unfortunately, sometimes even sacrifice their own lives. I wouldalso like to welcome the Ambassador of Afghanistan, Mr. Tanin, and thank him for his intervention.

I associate myself in advance with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union.

Afghanistan has entered a period marked by profound changes: two transitions, a security transition and a political transition are under way. The year 2014 will see the end of the military presence of the international coalition in the form that we have known so far. A new mission of advice, training and support will take over from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), in accordance with the commitments entered into at the NATO Summit in Chicago in 2012 to support the Afghan security forces over the long run.

Similarly, Afghanistan has already been preparing for many months for the presidential election, the first round of which is scheduled for 5 April. That election will clearly show that democracy has taken root in the country. The peaceful and lawful transfer of presidential authority is a sufficiently rare event to celebrate. A new President, the second since the fall of the Taliban, will take over the stewardship of the country, and we will be there to support him in fulfilling his mission.

We have just adopted resolution 2145 (2014). UNAMA's mandate has been extended for one year without major changes because of the election of the new Afghan Government in 2014 and because of other uncertainties that still have an impact on the shape of the future security arrangement. In that context, we believe that UNAMA, which is the centre of the international community's action in Afghanistan and which has proved itself over the course of 10 years, must be able to act next year based on a solid mandate.

The international community's efforts should adapt to the changes in the situation on the ground. In particular, the model of development, which is based on a counter-insurgency strategy, should be revised. However, we will not abandon the values we fought for alongside Afghans for 10 years. I have in mind in particular the role and rights of women in Afghan society.

We have less than 12 months ahead of us to evaluate and determine how the international community will be able to support Afghanistan in the long term. The mandate of UNAMA that we will adopt a year from now will have to be different, refocused on the priorities of the international community.

Put in a more visible and more central position, but also more complex, UNAMA's political role must be strengthened. The Mission, including the Special Representative, will have to provide its good offices to facilitate the implementation of the Afghan political process, especially in the areas of reconciliation and the strengthening of the rule of law, and support the efforts aimed at strengthening regional cooperation. UNAMA must also have additional capacity in the protection and promotion of human rights, an area in which it provides real expertise and an added value. It will have to play the role of coordinator of the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies to promote a model of development that meets the needs of an economy weakened by the decline in international aid and the emergence of an illicit economy that fuels instability. To that end, we believe that it is important to simplify the mandate. However, we remain committed, as far as possible, to maintaining UNAMA's presence throughout the Afghan territory, which is essential for a clear and comprehensive view of the situation.

As others have said before, we are also concerned about the resurgence of drug trafficking. Unfortunately, the year 2013 saw a new record in opium production. Furthermore, Afghanistan has become the world's largest producer of cannabis resin. There are now even amphetamine production centres in the country.

We know about the efforts of Afghans to address that challenge. We know that taking up the challenge requires the commitment of everyone, especially Afghanistan's regional partners. We will stand alongside the Afghans in that task. But today I would like to address the entire international community. As the Secretary- General underscored in his report (S/2014/163), the risk of the emergence of a narco-State exists and it is serious. We have to consider actions today that will make it possible to shield Afghanistan tomorrow from the deleterious effects of drug trafficking, which are corruption and violence.

We know, as experience has shown, that drug trafficking often goes hand in hand with insurrection and a challenge to a central authority. We must do everything to avoid the worst: to leave Afghanistan to its own devices with an insurrection that is certainly weakened but not totally reduced; with the Afghan security forces, who have shown that they are robust and effective, but are concerned about the international community's withdrawal; and with a socioeconomic and institutional fabric that has been rewoven but is still very fragile.

In that respect, the role that the fight against drug trafficking plays in UNAMA's mandate must be strengthened. Clearly, we do not want to make UNAMA a counter-narcotics agency. However, all possible synergies between the activities of UNAMA and the the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Afghanistan should been strengthened. UNAMA must also support regional cooperation in that area by supporting the development of the law enforcement, judiciary and health capacities of the Afghan State.

The Afghanistan after 11 September is now a chapter in the history books, but if we want to help

Afghans to write a truly different chapter in the future we have to act now.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/163) and Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his briefing today. I also thank Ambassador Tanin for his remarks this morning.

This is the first opportunity for the Council to express directly to Special Representative Kubiš and his team the sadness that we all felt at the tragic loss of the lives of four United Nations colleagues on 17 January. That appalling attack was a stark reminder of the dangers that international civilian staff face, and we pay tribute to the efforts of Mr. Kubiš and his team in Afghanistan.

The United Kingdom welcomes the adoption of today's resolution 2145 (2014), which renews the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). UNAMA plays a vital role in peacebuilding in Afghanistan and will continue to do so in 2014. I will focus my statement today on four key areas: security, elections, the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework and the United Nations future engagement in Afghanistan.

First, with regard to the security situation, we should be proud of our achievements. The determination and dedication of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Afghan National Security Forces have allowed the Government of Afghanistan to build the foundations of a stable and democratic country. The Afghan National Security Forces have risen to difficult challenges since taking full responsibility for Afghan security in June 2013, and we are encouraged by polling that shows growing confidence in their work. We expect the first all-female cohort of officer cadets to commence training in June. That is another significant achievement. However, we know that the support of NATO and the international community will continue to be vital in ensuring long-term security in Afghanistan. As a sign of our enduring commitment, the United Kingdom will contribute moer than $100 million a year until at least 2017 towards sustaining the Afghan national security forces. The United Kingdom also looks forward to hosting the NATO Summit later this year, which will provide the international community with an opportunity to reflect on ISAF's legacy and to set out NATO's post-2014 engagement in Afghanistan.

Secondly, on elections and the political transition, Afghanistan is entering the final phase of campaigning and technical preparations for elections. The presidential and provincial council elections are now less than four weeks away. This is truly a groundbreaking moment in Afghan politics, as Afghanistan moves into its transformation decade. The most recent figures show that over a third of those taking part in top-up voter registration are women. That is good news and will contribute to the inclusiveness of the elections. The United Kingdom has pledged $11 million to build the capacity of the women elected to provincial councils to ensure that their voices are heard in the democratic process. Transparency and inclusiveness are vital to ensuring the credibility of the elections. In that regard, we welcome the recent decision of the European Union to send an election assessment team to Afghanistan. The United Kingdom encourages the Government of Afghanistan to give all election observers the access they need to the electoral process so that, when the time comes, they can provide informed reports on the process.

Thirdly, I would like to address the issue of the next steps on the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. The Framework, which was agreed in 2012, remains the blueprint for the international community's development efforts in Afghanistan. Progress in priority areas such as the role of women is essential for long-term development and to sustain donor funding. We encourage UNAMA to assist in monitoring, coordinating and reporting on progress over the coming months, as requested in the resolution we have adopted today (resolution 2145 (2014)). The United Kingdom looks forward to co-chairing, with the Afghan Government, the development conference to be held later this year, which will be an opportunity for the international community to assess progress against the Framework and set our ambitions for the future.

Finally, the United Kingdom firmly supports a strong United Nations presence in Afghanistan. The United Nations will have an essential role next year, working with the Government of Afghanistan, to lock in the gains made by the international community over the past decade. We want the United Nations to have the resources it needs to enable a country-wide presence and carry out its responsibilities in line with the mandate endorsed today. But we urge the United Nations and its agencies to work more closely together, share resources and work with NATO and other relevant organizations

to spot the opportunities and tackle the challenges of the post-2014 environment.

One of the main challenges for Afghanistan, and indeed the work of the United Nations, is human rights, specifically the rights of women and girls. Women and girls in Afghanistan continue to face huge challenges, and the gains made are fragile. We encourage the United Nations to continue working closely with the Government of Afghanistan, international partners and civil society to improve the status of women and girls.

Afghans are taking charge of their security and their democracy. Afghanistan is changing fast, with a growing economy, a young population and a revolution in access to the outside world through social media. Despite the many challenges, therefore, 2014 is a year full of opportunity for Afghanistan. We pledge to continue our support to the Government of Afghanistan as it seeks to build a more peaceful, democratic and prosperous future for all Afghans.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr. Ján Kubiš, and thank him for his briefing. We also welcome Ambassador Zahir Tanin and thank him for his statement.

Chile welcomes the holding of the presidential and provincial council elections on 5 April. Preparations are on track, with an existing electoral framework, a final list of presidential candidates and a functional Independent Electoral Complaints Commission.

We must stress that the efforts to promote and strengthen women's participation as voters, candidates and observers will provide a gauge of how representative the process is. The elections will be a fundamental and legitimate political transition in Afghanistan's stability. In that respect, the process must be credible, transparent, inclusive and entirely in line with the country's legal and constitutional norms.

It is important that the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) continue at all levels so as to ensure that women can participate in decision-making processes and that their needs are adequately met. The inclusion of women in the police and security forces is important and should remain a priority for the new authorities.

Chile reiterates the need to strengthen the protection of civilians and condemns the use of force against unarmed civilians, including women and children, whether by pro- or anti-Government forces. The authorities' primary responsibilty is to ensure the protection of civilians.

In addition, progress in the area of human rights is a crucial element for the stability of the country, which remains fragile. We agree with the Secretary-General in his call on the authorities to adopt any measures necessary to support the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission in its crucial role.

Food insecurity, the situation of internally displaced persons and the ongoing vulnerability to natural disasters, against the backdrop of a conflict that has lasted for decades, are humanitarian challenges that need to be faced in a coordinated manner by the international community and the new authorities. That will not be possible without ensuring full, prompt and unhindered access for humanitarian personnel.

In that regard, the United Nations should continue its presence on the ground through the work of UNAMA, in the same way that the country team does in the area of development. Initiatives such as World Health Organization support to the efforts of local authorities in the fight against polio must be maintained. The conditions to achieve a transition from relief to development must also be created. The international community must provide its cooperation in such efforts.

We regret that terrorism, in all its various forms and manifestations, continues to intensify in some regions. The number of events and victims has continued to grow and is at its worst level since 2011. We condemn the terrorist attack on a restaurant in Kabul on 17 January, which took the lives of four United Nations officials and 17 Afghan civilians, and we express our condolences to the families of the victims.

Given the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force at the end of 2014, Chile believes the capabilities of the Afghan security forces to deal with the threats and challenges on the horizon should continue to be strengthened. That will mean mitigating the current uncertainty prevailing in Afghanistan. A concrete example in this general area is the approval by the consultative Loya Jirga of the bilateral security agreement with the United States. It is important that the agreement be signed to ensure that such assistance is provided and maintained and a transition to stability is achieved.

It is essential that the next Government have the stability needed for an orderly transition to be carried out. Given the uncertainty that has prevailed in Afghanistan during the last year of the transition, it is important that UNAMA's mandate be extended for 12 months, and we welcome that extension. Equally important is the need to provide the Mission with the necessary priority measures to fully discharge its duties.

In conclusion, I would like to express the support of Chile for the efforts of the Afghan people to build a democratic State based on the rule of law and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which are essential for its stability and development as well as for the sustainability and development of the region of which it is a part.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and Ambassador Tanin for his remarks.

Like others before me, I would like to extend my delegation's condolences over the tragic loss of lives of United Nations family members and all other victims of the brutal attack on 17 January in Kabul. We pay tribute to the dedication of all international staff facing continuous security challenges and risking their lives for the sake of the people of Afghanistan.

Lithuania is firmly committed to contributing to building a peaceful and stable future of Afghanistan. Since 2005, we have been leading a provincial reconstruction team in Chaghcharan, the provincial capital of Ghor. Our goal of assisting the Afghan people in building a secure, democratic, inclusive and self-sufficient Afghanistan remains unchanged.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement to be made later in this meeting by the observer of the European Union (EU).

This year, Afghanistan stands at a critical milestone. The presidential elections scheduled for 5 April will see power transferred from one elected president to another for the first time in the history of Afghanistan. We welcome the advancements in the electoral process made through the timely adoption of legal framework, the functioning of established electoral bodies, the declared non-interference by the Government, the vigorous political campaigning and the enhanced public outreach throughout the country.

An important development of the campaign is the progress in ensuring female participation in the upcoming election, with 35 percent of new voter registration cards being distributed to female voters. In addition, 13,000 women searchers were trained to work in polling centres on election day.

We also salute women candidates for the position of Vice-President, as well as over 100 women provincial council candidates. Ensuring the safety of women candidates and voters is key to ensuring that the outcome of the election represents the will of the entire nation and engages the full potential of Afghanistan's women in building its future. Security during campaigning and on the day of voting remains a major concern and must be addressed with all due seriousness.

The support of the United Nations Assistnace Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to Afghan-led elections that live up to inclusiveness, transparency, credibility and legitimacy standards is of critical importance. We welcome the fact that Afghan authorities are encouraging observation of the election, including by international observers and the invitation extended to European Union and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe observer teams.

The limited progress towards the establishment of a peace process with the armed opposition continues to be an issue of concern. We stress the importance of an inclusive Afghan-led process and we call on UNAMA to continue to facilitate local dialogue on reconciliation. UNAMA initiatives aimed at mitigating inter-ethnic and inter-tribal tensions and linking Government officials, community leaders, religious scholars and civil society, including women, are welcomed and need to continue.

Serious concerns remain about the security situation in the country. The gradual withdrawal of international troops has left Afghan Government forces more vulnerable to attacks by insurgents. Due to the rise in casualties, 2013 was the second most violent year since the fall of the Taliban regime. The secure functioning of UNAMA, especially that of its field offices, is also directly impacted by the withdrawal of international forces.

Armed clashes and improvised explosive devices account for 75 per cent of deaths. It is particularly troubling that casualties among children increased by more than one third as compared to those in 2009. About three fourths of the death toll is attributed to the

Taliban. Reduced civilian suffering and fewer civilian casualties, together with improvements in human rights protection, should be the core principles of improved stability and security for Afghanistan in 2014. My delegation would support tracking civilian casualties disaggregated by gender.

The anti-Government elements targeting Government institutions and the international community is totally unacceptable. The efforts by Afghan forces to counter such attacks are crucial. Having further international assistance in support of the Afghan army and police forces will remain essential. Lithuania has pledged to contribute its support to the Afghan National Security Forces with a new training mission after 2014, once the necessary legal framework is in place. As an International Security Assistance Force country, we encourage our Afghan partners to finalize the conclusion of the NATO status-of-forces agreement as soon as possible.

The progress made by Afghanistan in improving the human rights situation remains fragile. We urge the Afghan Government to take the necessary steps to support the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission so that it can fulfil its critical role.

Violence against women in particular reached record levels in 2013, according to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. A major concern is the failure to enforce the law on the elimination of violence against women, which leaves perpetrators at large. Too many victims of violence keep silent for fear of reprisals. We commend the decision of President Karzai not to sign the current draft criminal procedure code into law, as it would limit women's rights to seek justice. UNAMA must continue its work in identifying the challenges as well as remedies regarding national and international efforts to advance women's rights and women's participation in the political, economic and social life of the country.

Attacks on schools, teachers and students continued unabated by the Taliban and other armed groups. Such violence is interfering with access to education, and in some areas actually rolled back progress already made.

A particular point of concern for my delegation is the 36 per cent increase in opium cultivation in 2013. Given the nexus between drug trafficking, arms, violence and terrorism, we stress the importance of more resolute measures and Afghan initiatives aimed at accelerating counter-narcotics policies by including the implementation of a National Drug Control Strategy, as well as efforts aimed at addressing the flourishing illicit economy and corruption. In all of that, UNAMA has an important role to play.

Strengthening Afghanistan's regional ties is vital for its long-term stability. Active Afghan leadership within the Istanbul Process and bilateral steps to engage with neighbouring countries, including increased recognition of shared interests with Pakistan, is welcomed by my delegation.

Lithuania is committed to the long-term development of Afghanistan through the EU and bilateral development projects focusing on good governance, capacity-building and infrastructure. UNAMA has a vital role in ensuring effective coordination of donor assistance, especially implementing mutual commitments made at the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan in 2012 through the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.

In conclusion, the UNAMA presence in Afghanistan is perceived by the Afghan people as an overall stability factor and an indication of long-term commitment by the international community. The United Nations must continue its presence in Afghanistan to ensure that the gains of more than a decade are not lost and all sacrifices were not in vain. We welcome the UNAMA mandate extension and call for its implementation, especially in its field presence, with determination. Assisting Afghans in the challenging transformation decade is our responsibility.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his briefing and the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Mr. Tanin, for his statement.

This year represents a crucial year of transition for Afghanistan, during which it will undergo a three-pronged transition — on political, security and economic fronts — to comprehensively build on Afghanistan's stability, prosperity and harmonious coexistence among various communities. Those transitions will require unremitting efforts on the part of the Afghan Government and its people, which would not be possible without the persistent support and assistance from the international community.

The presidential and provincial council elections slated for 5 April represent an important milestone in Afghanistan's political transition. China welcomes the

smooth progress in the preparations for the upcoming major elections and wishes for their success in leading to smooth transitions that are in keeping with the common interest of Afghanistan and the international community.

The security situation in Afghanistan remains fragile, as represented by the major increases in various types of security incidents since last year. We express our concerns over rising civilian casualties, and we support capacity-building for Afghanistan's national security and police forces to enable them to effectively fulfil safety and security responsibilities. The parties concerned should fully take into account the need to protect the security and stability of Afghanistan and steadily and responsibly reduce their armed forces in order to ensure smooth progress in Afghanistan's security transition.

China supports the efforts of the Afghan Government and of the High Peace Council to promote an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation process. We hope that the international community will help Afghanistan to advance the reconciliation process on its own terms, and we welcome the neighbours of that country playing an active role.

China highly appreciates the efforts of the Afghan Government to develop its economy and to promote employment. We expect the international community to effectively fulfil its assistance commitments by giving top priority to helping Afghanistan to implement its national development strategy, thereby enabling Afghanistan to achieve economic and social development and to gradually eliminate conditions that favour terrorism, drug production, drug trafficking and transnational organized crime.

Afghanistan's peace, reconstruction and long-term security are closely linked to regional peace and stability. China supports Afghanistan's efforts to participate more actively in regional cooperation and to enhance mutual trust and good-neighbourly relations with countries in the region on the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefits. We encourage Afghanistan to make better use of the various regional mechanisms, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in a common effort to address the many regional security threats and challenges.

We support the United Nations in continuing to play an important role in coordinating international assistance to build peace in Afghanistan. We welcome resolution 2145 (2014), adopted earlier this morning, which renews UNAMA's mandate. China supports providing adequate funding for the Mission to implement its mandate. We hope that UNAMA will strengthen its cooperation with the Afghan Government, fulfil its responsibilities under the Council's mandate, effectively coordinate international assistance and strengthen the international community's confidence in Afghanistan's smooth transition and transformation. China supports the efforts of the international community and of the Afghan Government to explore ways to make better use of UNAMA's post-2014 role, in line with the evolving situation in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is an important neighbour of China. We look forward to a friendly, unified, stable and developed Afghanistan. We always respect that country's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and the path of development chosen by its people, in line with its circumstances. China has long participated actively in rebuilding peace in Afghanistan by providing assistance to the best of its ability. In August, for the first time China will host the Foreign Ministers Conference on the Istanbul Process on Afghanistan. Through that meeting, China hopes to garner consensus in our common effort to support the long-term transition of Afghanistan and to promote regional peace and stability.

China stands ready to work with the international community in playing a constructive role in helping Afghanistan to achieve early political reconciliation and economic revitalization and to embark upon a path towards lasting peace and sustainable development.

Mr. Mangaral (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General and Special Representative Mr. Ján Kubiš for the detailed report (S/2014/163) on developments in the situation in Afghanistan since the end of 2013. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations for his statement.

Chad's vote in favour of resolution 2145 (2014) to renew the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is a vote of encouragement, as we note with satisfaction the political, economic and human rights developments with the establishment of the Kabul process. We are also encouraged by progress on integration, regional cooperation and human rights, as well as the improved coordination and conditions for humanitarian assistance thanks to the Mission's support.

We call on all the parties concerned to commit themselves, in a spirit of conciliation and reconciliation, to restoring and strengthening peace in Afghanistan. We also welcome the inclusive direct talks involving all stakeholders, namely, politicians, traditional community leaders, religious scholars and civil society, towards the restoration of peace in Afghanistan. We think that the elections due to be held in April will help to further stabilize the country.

However, we are very concerned about the recent security situation in Afghanistan, given the significantly increased number of incidents in 2013, including the killing of four UNAMA staff members in January. In that regard, Chad calls for respect of human rights, in particular international humanitarian law, which protects civilian populations in armed conflicts. Particular attention should be paid to the situation of children and women and other vulnerable people, who often find themselves victims of incidents involving anti-personnel mines. We are very concerned about the increase in the trafficking in drugs and other narcotics, which has a negative impact on the international security situation, as was the case in Mali, where the situation deteriorated with the rise in criminal networks and funding for international terrorism.

Chad encourages Afghanistan's neighbouring States to continue to cooperate in the transnational fight against drug and arms trafficking. Chad support UNAMA and the work of the international community aimed at finding a political solution to the crisis and joins the Secretary-General's call for increased humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations.

Finally, we condemn armed groups that recruit child soldiers and commit violence against women. The perpetrators of such crimes should be prosecuted and brought to justice. In conclusion, we support the United Nations staff in Afghanistan, in particular Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Ján Kubiš, for all their ongoing efforts for the Afghan people.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his briefing. I also thank the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their sacrifice in very dangerous circumstances. I would also like to thank the representative of Afghanistan for his comprehensive statement.

Jordan is concerned about the volatile security situation in Afghanistan and the increased number of civilian victims, in particular women and children. We strongly condemn all terrorist attacks on staff of the various United Nations organizations present in Afghanistan and those that target civilians and Afghan security forces. We extend our sincere condolences to the families of the victims and to the people and Government of Afghanistan and the States whose nationals died in those attacks. Jordan calls on States and the entire international community to continue to provide support and assistance to the Afghan Government in the fight against terrorism and in de-mining activities, not to mention the elimination of explosive remnants of war. We must meet our international commitments and provide assistance to Afghanistan.

Jordan contributes to international efforts seeking to establish a favourable environment for Afghanistan's security, stability and development and to rebuilding the State on the basis of our commitment to actively participate in peacebuilding and humanitarian assistance efforts. We have a duty to oppose any attempt to take hostage the great religion of Islam, distort its image or misrepresent its content. Islam calls for tolerance and dialogue, respect for human dignity and security.

Afghanistan is on the threshold of historic elections. We hope that they will strengthen the capacities of the stakeholders to deal with the numerous challenges that the country faces. In that regard, we welcome the ongoing preparatory work for the elections, which are on the right track and which we hope will take place next month in accordance with Afghanistan's legal and constitutional framework.

We are encouraged by the intensive political activity within all political parties in the country. We are also encouraged by the peaceful political statements made by all of the candidates. We would call upon the Special Representative to continue his meetings with the stakeholders in order to ensure the integrity, inclusiveness and fairness of the electoral process.

Jordan welcomes the reform efforts undertaken by the Afghan Government, including the measures being taken in the area of human rights, particularly the fight against violence against women. We reiterate the need for the Afghan Government to pursue its efforts to strengthen human rights and the rule of law.

At the end of the year, Afghanistan will come to a new crossroads. The international community's message to Afghanistan under those circumstances should be clear, namely, that the Afghan Government and people will be able to count on the assistance of the international community. We must strengthen the role of the United Nations and deepen our partnership with Afghanistan. None of us can countenance the effects of a return to the past or a reversal of the accomplishments made in the country to date.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): We welcome Mr. Ján Kubiš to the Security Council once again and thank him for his briefing. We also thank Ambassador Tanin for his remarks today.

To begin, I want to extend my Government's condolences to the families and friends of the United Nations personnel who, on 17 January, were killed by a suicide bomber at a restaurant in Kabul. That attack also claimed the lives of three United States citizens and the local representative of the International Monetary Fund. The tragedy reminds us of the need to recognize and support the many dedicated men and women from the United Nations and other international organizations, international civil society and coalition military forces who work every day to support the Afghan people as they strive to build a more peaceful, democratic and prosperous homeland.

On 5 April, Afghan citizens will head to the polls, at a time of both rising promise and ongoing challenges. That historic balloting can pave the way for Afghanistan's first peaceful and democratic transfer of political authority from one Head of State to another.

One of the best ways to ensure the credibility of the elections is through independent monitoring. To that end, more than 12,000 Afghan observers are expected to have a role in verifying the integrity of the process. The Independent Election Commission (IEC) is also inviting international observers. We encourage the IEC and the Afghan National Security Forces to do all they can to ensure access for voters, observers and party representatives to all polling centres, including those in remote and high-risk areas.

In particular, we call on all authorities to ensure that women are able to participate as voters, candidates, observers and election officials in a meaningful way. Credible, transparent and inclusive elections will pave the way to democratic progress in Afghanistan. A successful transfer of presidential power this year following democratic elections will solidify the gains made over the past 12 years and contribute much to the country's future development and stability. It will also show all Afghans, including the Taliban, that the rule of law matters and that Afghanistan's constitutional system is resilient enough to overcome grave obstacles.

For its part, the United States Government will provide nearly $100 million to facilitate the April elections through a variety of programmes, including monitoring and observation. I emphasize that my Government strongly supports the democratic process but that we neither favour nor oppose any particular candidate. It is up to the Afghan people, and only the Afghan people, to choose their leaders.

This morning, the United States was pleased to join the Security Council in extending the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for another year, with its core mandate intact. That renewal will enable the Mission to meet the challenges of the ongoing transition period, particularly through support for the political process and regional diplomacy, coordinating humanitarian and other assistance, human rights monitoring, institution-building and capacity development.

Of course, UNAMA's support alone cannot guarantee success. The international community as a whole has made a long-term commitment to Afghanistan. My Government welcomes the engagement of the Heart of Asia countries, including their effort to further integrate Afghanistan's economy through the Istanbul Process. Regional support will also be critical in supporting Afghanistan's democratic transition and Afghan-led efforts at internal reconciliation.

We should be under no illusions. Serious security threats remain in Afghanistan, including attacks by extremist elements against humanitarian aid workers and other Afghan and international civilian personnel. We deplore such attacks, which are wholly destructive in purpose and clearly contrary to the well-being of the Afghan people. We call upon all parties to join in condemning those crimes, seeking accountability for them and striving to prevent them. The citizens of Afghanistan deserve to live in safety, with full and unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance, including food, shelter, health services and emergency trauma care.

Over the past dozen years, Afghanistan has been the scene of incredible turbulence, a drama touched by

tragedy but held aloft by hope. The country now stands on the threshold of a historic election, facing great challenges and yet bolstered by the productive energy of a population that is eager to build a more democratic and prosperous future. The United Nations should be proud of the role it has played in helping the Afghan people to lay the groundwork for such a future, and we should be determined to continue that vital effort in the months and years to come.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are very grateful to Mr. Ján Kubiš for his briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and for presenting the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/163). We are also grateful for Mr. Tanin's presentation.

We support the efforts of the Afghan leadership to continue moving the country on the path of peace, stability, development and broad cooperation with neighbours in the region. We pay tribute to efforts by the Afghans themselves to try, in the face of various challenges, to determine their future and take responsibility for their development and security. We hope that at this crucial turning point in the history of the country the people and society will be able to mobilize their efforts and come together to fulfil constructive objectives in the interest of all, respecting human rights, fairness and harmony.

The situation in Afghanistan has been worsening and it has remained at the centre of the attention of the international community, especially since the country is nearing critical milestones, namely, presidential elections and the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Those factors will, to a large extent, determine the dynamics for the unfolding of the situation, not only in Afghanistan but in the region as a whole.

In this crucial period, we need a comprehensive analysis of the risks and threats that stand in Afghanistan's way. We cannot but note that the report before us today does not mention many of the challenges that the country faces, such as the Taliban and Al-Qaida — which is not mentioned in the report, as if Al-Qaida was not present in the country at all — and other terrorist groups. Their aggressive activity is a factor in the significant increase in number of civilian casualties and deaths among Afghan security forces. Armed opposition has strengthened in various regions, particularly in areas previously under the full control of the Government. The situation in the south and east of the country is deteriorating. That is confirmed by the armed attack on the Afghan National Army base in Kunar province mentioned in the report, the bold abduction by Taliban extremists of residents in Kandahar and Nangarhar provinces for supporting the Government and the increased number of deaths among peaceful individuals in Helmand province. Increasing terrorist activity in the north and north-east is especially alarming, as the armed opposition there has more than 10,000 fighters.

We cannot agree with the report's assessment of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. It is not at all limited to remote and mountainous regions. It has been active outside of Afghanistan's borders, as confirmed by the killing of three Turkmen border guards near the border between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. Just three years ago, the northern region of Afghanistan was calm.

We are highly concerned about the situation that could develop in Central Asia after the withdrawal of ISAF. We have seen increasing numbers of attacks on foreigners, particularly United Nations staff. The terrorist attack in January in Kabul that lead to the deaths of 20 people, including the Russian representative at the mission, confirmed that the Taliban believe they can act with impunity. The latest incident — the killing of a journalist in the capital on 11 March — is another example.

Bearing that in mind, it is our belief that certain people continue to convince themselves that the situation is fine, especially given that the insurgents have demonstrated their destructive potential in the run-up to the elections.

The Russian Federation is closely monitoring the electoral process. It is of serious concern that, on 10 March, an appeal was published on the Taliban website, urging the citizens of Afghanistan to avoid participating in the electoral process, because any such participation would be considered as efforts to assist the occupation forces.

A legitimate question therefore arises: To what extent is the forced transfer of responsibility conducted in the country, from the international military force to the Afghan forces justified? And to what extent is the artificial withdrawal timetable justified? To what extent has the coalition fulfilled the Council's mandate in terms of stabilization and security and preparing effective Afghan law enforcement and security forces?

That will require NATO to provide an objective status report to the Security Council at the end of the year.

It is our belief that, if Kabul agrees to NATO's further presence after 2014, it must be based on an international legal framework in the form of a Security Council resolution. After stabilization tasks have been achieved, there will no further need for foreign military contingents in Afghanistan. Efforts to address that issue should focus on ensuring that Afghan citizens and military personnel do not lose their lives as a result of erroneous air strikes by ISAF. The most recent such error took place in Logar province, killing five people and injuring eight.

There is no doubt that opium production, which has increased by 150 per cent, has contributed to extremist activity. The number of drug addicts has increased by 1 million, among which there are 300,000 children. The fight against illicit drug manufacturing — which represents a threat to peace and stability not only in Afghanistan, but at regional and international levels — requires collective efforts. It is not possible to pretend that is not a problem, simply by indicating the lack of a specific mandate under ISAF.

Areas of cooperation must be defined among NATO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), aimed at illicit drug trafficking. The CSTO has significant experience in combating drug trafficking, and such efforts against that scourge would be more effective in cooperation with NATO. Even a modest reduction in drug trafficking activity would represent a major achievement by the international community.

Russia fully supports the efforts of the Afghan Government to support national reconciliation. Those efforts should be headed by the Kabul Government and based on three principles, that is, insurgents must lay down their weapons, acknowledge Afghanistan's Constitution and completely renounce relations with Al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations.

It is clear that, as foreign forces draw down from Afghanistan and Afghan security forces gain strength, the motivation of the armed opposition will weaken. The history of the Qatari office that was temporarily closed by the Taliban is a good example. Bearing that in mind, it might be possible to weaken the Council's sanctions against the Taliban under certain conditions.

The Russian Federation considers it important to strengthen regional cooperation in contributing to the development of Afghanistan as a peaceful, economically developed State. The best platform for that is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which represents nearly all of the countries of the region, including Afghanistan.

Similarly, we do not consider justified what has been noted about the Istanbul Process and its high marks. Its added value has not yet been confirmed and the working group format it is following has not proved very effective. Also, there has been a lack of interest on the part of the States parties. In our view, that process simply represents a platform for international dialogue to generate innovative ideas.

The stabilization of Afghanistan will achieve firm results only through the collective efforts of all actors, which must be effectively coordinated in order to maximize results. In that respect, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan will make an essential contribution. Its role, as the foreign military contingents withdraw, will only increase, as resolution 2145 (2014), adopted today, confirms.

Russia is ready to continue to develop regional cooperation in the interests of Afghanistan in those areas that could provide real benefits to the country. We are open to engaging in partnership with all interested States in the implementation of projects of interest to Afghanistan.

The Russian Federation continues to provide humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. We anticipate that coordinated regional efforts to implement the commitments made by the international community will contribute to the sustainable development of the country and the well-being of its citizens, as well as help to re-establish a peaceful Afghanistan that is free of terrorism and drug-related crime.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate our Afghan colleagues in the light of the upcoming holiday of Nowruz and to wish them a good year.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Luxembourg.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Ján Kubiš, for his briefing and his work as the Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I also thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Zahir Tanin, for his statement.

I align myself with the statement to be made during the debate by the observer of the European Union.

At the outset, I would like to express my condolences and sympathy to the family members of the victims of the terrorist attack on 17 January in Kabul. I would also dedicate special thoughts to the four members of UNAMA who lost their lives during that cowardly and senseless attack. They deserve more than our thanks, more than our gratitude. They deserve our admiration for having served in the cause of peace and the cause of the United Nations.

The tribute I pay to them today is also addressed to all of the staff members of UNAMA who are carrying out outstanding work on the Council's behalf to serve the Organization and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Violence and insecurity, uncertainty about the future — the Afghan people face those issues each day. The UNAMA report of 8 February on the human cost of conflict in relation to civilians speaks volumes of the sufferings endured by the population. In reading the numbers of victims and the growing proportion of women and children among them, we realize that one of the major challenges still to be met is that of security, in particular the security of civilians, beginning with the security of voters and candidates in the presidential and provincial elections to be held on 5 April.

As an election is meaningful only if all voters are able to freely go to the polling stations and if the candidates are able to conduct their campaigns without risking their lives or being subject to threats, we urge that no effort be spared to establish an adequate security framework. We reiterate the importance we attach to the framework's being applied to everyone, including specifically to women. Luxembourg believes that the degree of women's participation will be one of the benchmarks against which we can measure the success of the voting and the credibility of the results. The Independent Election Commission and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission will also have a central role to play guaranteeing that the elections are peaceful, transparent, credible, inclusive and fair.

Although the path leading to the elections of 5 April is still fraught with pitfalls, the very fact that those elections are taking place is in itself a remarkable success. But as important as the elections may be, they are only one step; they are not the end of a process. The pacification and stabilization of the country will also depend upon the progress that the new leaders will be able to achieve in several key areas. We would like to underscore at least three.

First is respect for human rights. No society can rebuild itself if it allows impunity, injustice and the law of the jungle to take root. That is why it is important that the Afghan authorities allow the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission to effectively play its role as a free and independent institution. Therefore, in accordance with the commitments made under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, women's rights must be genuinely and fully recognized, and the law against violence against women must be genuinely and fully implemented.

That is also why, as mentioned by the Special Representative, we encourage the Afghan authorities to redouble their efforts to implement the action plan to halt the use and recruitment of children in the Afghan National Security Forces, which they signed on 30 January 2011 with the United Nations. We believe, moreover, that it would be desirable that the section of the Secretary-General's report dealing with the plight of children in armed conflict contain information on all the violations and abuses committed against children in Afghanistan and on the state of the implementation of the action plan.

The second key area for bringing peace and stability to the country is the fight against poverty. Too many Afghans still live below the poverty line. We do not have the right to ignore that situation or to accept it. It is intolerable on a human level;it is disastrous for the country's stability. It will be up to the newly elected leaders to address the question of how to proceed to a more equitable distribution of resources. But it will also be up to the international community to accord all the required attention to that aspect when designing its aid programmes for the Afghan people for the post-2014 period.

In that context, I would like to mention that in February the European Union and Afghanistan signed an agreement that marks the completion of bilateral negotiations for Afghanistan's membership in the World Trade Organization. That membership should eventually make a sustainable contribution to the process of stabilization, economic reform and sustainable development begun by the Afghan authorities.

The third key area has to do with the lifting of the uncertainty with regard to the international presence

beginning on 1 January 2015, after the transitional period. On several occasions, the international community has reaffirmed its willingness to remain engaged with the Afghan people. In return, it is crucial to remove any uncertainty with regard to the framework for future international missions, including support missions for the Afghan security forces.

In conclusion, I welcome the adoption of resolution 2145 (2014) in the context of this debate, which renews the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan until 17 March 2015. I thank our Australian colleagues, who led the negotiations on that important text. In our view, after 2014 UNAMA will be called upon to continue playing the important supporting role that it has had so far. To do that, it is essential that UNAMA have adequate means to maintain its presence on the ground in Afghanistan's provinces and among the Afghan people.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Mukerji (India): At the outset, Madam President, let me thank you for organizing today's debate on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, and Ambassador Tanin for their briefings.

While the text of my statement is being circulated, I will, in the interests of time, make a shorter presentation.

Let me begin by paying tribute to the former first Vice-President of Afghanistan, Marshal Mohammad Qasim Fahim, who passed away on 9 March. His contribution to fighting the forces of terrorism and extremism and to the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan will always be remembered. Mohammed Qasim Fahim was also a close friend of India and made personal contributions to nurturing and strengthening the India-Afghanistan strategic partnership. The Vice-President of India led the Indian delegation to his funeral.

I would also like to pay tribute to the four members of the United Nations family who lost their lives on 17 January in the ghastly attack in a restaurant in Kabul. We condemn that barbaric act, which was perpetrated by the Taliban. On 13 March, a suicide bomber, whose target was the Indian Consulate in Kandahar, was killed by Afghan security forces just outside the Consulate building, preventing a major terrorist act.

The presidential election, which is scheduled for 5 April 2014, is the most important upcoming event in the political transition of Afghanistan. We should look for an election process that has credibility with the Afghan people and culminates in the choice of an Afghan President who is acceptable to all Afghans. We note that numerous election rallies and meetings are being organized across Afghanistan, and we applaud the Afghan people's confidence and their desire to participate in free and fair elections.

On the security situation, we note with distress the mention in the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/163) that provinces in the east and south of Afghanistan faced intensified attacks from an array of groups, including from Tehrik-e Taliban, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, and Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, in addition to the Afghan Taliban. Our assessment is that intimidation in the southern and eastern parts of the country is a threat to smooth elections.

We want to stress the fact that terrorism, which emanates from beyond Afghanistan's borders, is the main threat to Afghanistan's security and stability. It is that terrorism that promotes terrorist activities against Afghan interests, as well as against friends of Afghanistan, like India. It is unfortunate that terrorist sanctuaries and safe havens and the financial and tactical support structures for terrorism still exist.

It is necessary to demystify the notion that the problem in Afghanistan is one of rivalry among various ethnic or tribal groups. The real problem is that Afghanistan continues to face terrorism, which seeks to erode the efforts of Afghanistan and its friends to reconstruct the socioeconomic fabric of the country. We need to look at the sources of insecurity and violence in Afghanistan. We stand firmly with Afghanistan in confronting the threat and challenge posed by terrorism.

Turning to the reconciliation process, we believe that it must remain Afghan led, Afghan owned and Afghan controlled, while respecting the agreed red lines. We do not endorse any effort to treat the Government of Afghanistan on par with the Taliban. We have always maintained that the success of economic transition in Afghanistan is as crucial as the success of political and security transitions. It is the view of my delegation that the mandate of UNAMA should be to support the political institutions of Afghanistan, besides

mobilizing international focus on the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

We believe that UNAMA should also harness its strength in the humanitarian and developmental work, where its ability to reach the remotest corner of Afghanistan is well proven. UNAMA should concentrate on capacity-building. In that regard, we would like to assure the Council of India's fullest cooperation.

We note the important references in the resolution adopted today by the Council (resolution 2145 (2014)) on UNAMA to the major processes that underpin the attempt by the international community to support Afghanistan. At the regional level, we would like to draw the attention of the Council to the senior officials' meeting under the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan held in New Delhi on 17 January and the visit of the Minister of External Affairs of India to Kandahar on 15 February to inaugurate, with President Karzai, the Afghanistan National Agricultural Sciences and Technology University.

Those recent events are part of India's long-established policy of, and commitment to, assisting the people and Government of Afghanistan as they build a peaceful, pluralistic, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan. India does not have the luxury of an exit strategy in Afghanistan, which shares a civilizational linkage with India.

We do not share the negativity and pessimism portrayed about the future of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is going through political, security and economic transitions at the same time. The uncertainties associated with the transitions pose real challenges. The progress that has been achieved by the people and Government of Afghanistan in the past 12 years in the social, political and economic spheres has taught us that, with sustained support from the international community, Afghanistan can successfully overcome those challenges.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that, at this critical juncture of transition and transformation, we want to express our full support to the political, social and economic transition taking place in Afghanistan. We would like to convey, a few days before Nowruz, our best wishes to the people of Afghanistan for the upcoming electoral process and would like to assure them of the sincere support of the Government and people of India.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2014/163), Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his briefing and Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

I would also express Italy's condolences to the families of the victims of the terrorist attack on 17 January in Kabul.

Italy fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union, and I would like to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

Italy wishes to express its satisfaction over the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which is a pillar of the international civilian presence in Afghanistan and a fundamental contribution to the development and stabilization of the country. UNAMA has made a remarkable contribution in accompanying Afghanistan on its road to growth, human rights protection and institutional strengthening. We greatly appreciate the generous efforts of the women and men of UNAMA to bring assistance to the Afghan people, under the commendable leadership of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Afghanistan.

Between now and the end of 2014, Afghanistan has to meet a series of crucial appointments. The election will mark the first time in the country's history of a turnover from one Head of State to another through a democratic process, and the completion of the transitional process will pave the way for the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force and for NATO mission Resolute Support.

It is vital that the electoral process, from start to finish, be regular, leading to the proclamation of the new Head of State. Acceptance of the result by the defeated parties and public opinion will depend on the perception that the electoral process has been legitimate, credible, transparent and inclusive — consequently, so will a peaceful and seamless political transition. To that end, the United Nations should also dedicate its support to continue aiding the country on its path to civil and economic development.

The proper and orderly holding of the presidential and provincial elections will have to contend firmly

with the security factor. That is the responsibility of the Afghan National Security Forces, which are making constant progress in the difficult daily challenge of controlling the territory. Unfortunately, terrorist assassination attempts and attacks define everyday life in Afghanistan — a circumstance that means we cannot lower our guard and that the road to the final stabilization of the country will require more time.

On the completion of the transition process, it is of fundamental importance that Afghanistan and the United States sign the bilateral security agreement in the near term, since the delay is having a clear impact on planning NATO's future presence in Afghanistan.

Italy reaffirms its conviction that, until there is reconciliation within Afghanistan, there will be no prospects for stabilization, nor will any stabilization last without the contribution of the other regional stakeholders. Italy therefore confirms its support for the peace process, recognizing the full ownership of Afghanistan. In doing so we also voice our expectation that there will be no backtracking in the area of democratic gains and civil and gender rights, or yielding to terrorism.

It is essential not to lower ambitions or to sacrifice the quality and quantity of the benchmarks the Kabul authorities are called on to respect. We therefore expect our Afghan friends to honour the legacy of Tokyo and to achieve certain and measurable results in areas such as the democratic and electoral process, the fight against corruption, administrative and economic governance and human rights. That is another reason that Italy so appreciates the important space that the resolution just adopted (resolution 2145 (2014)) dedicates to those aspects, in particular the protection of human rights.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): I wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his comprehensive briefing. I also thank Ambassador Tanin of Afghanistan for his statement.

I would first like to express my deepest condolences to the Government and people of Afghanistan for the great loss of their First Vice-President, Marshal Mohammad Qasim Fahim. His exceptional contribution to the reconstruction of Afghanistan will be remembered.

I am particularly gratified to address the Security Council on the situation in Afghanistan because I have been personally involved in Japan's efforts to help create stability and development in that beautiful country since the 1990s, and in particular since the Tokyo Conference on Consolidation of Peace in Afghanistan, held in January 2002.

Japan welcomes today's adoption of resolution 2145 (2014) renewing the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for another 12 months. In this time of uncertainty, the continuous presence of UNAMA is crucial. I would like also to emphasize the importance of ensuring adequate resources for UNAMA to efficiently support Afghanistan on its path towards peace and stability.

The year 2014 is one of historical significance for the people of Afghanistan, as the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) will be completed and the country will experience the election of its second President. Today, I would like to touch upon, first, the elections; secondly, the challenges that must be addressed by the future Government; and, finally, Japan's commitment to Afghanistan.

First, on the elections, for the long-term stability of Afghanistan, it is of the utmost importance that the upcoming presidential and provincial council elections lend strong legitimacy to the new Government through a credible and inclusive election process. I reiterate the importance of holding the elections without delay on 5 April, in accordance with the Afghan Constitution. In that regard, I commend the tireless efforts of the Government and the electoral management bodies of Afghanistan to keep the technical preparations on track. Japan has made financial contributions through the United Nations Development Programme in order to have a positive impact on the process. I call on all eligible citizens of Afghanistan to participate in these elections of crucial importance to deciding their own future.

Secondly, I would like to touch upon what we would like to see from Afghanistan, in particular from the future Government that will take over the responsibilities of President Karzai to lead the country towards long-term stability. On that subject, I welcome the participation of the presidential candidates at the special Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board meeting that was held on 29 January. Since all the candidates have been active in the political life of

Afghanistan since 2001, I am confident that they all understand very well the spirit of partnership that exists between the Afghan Government and the international community. Even so, it was important for us to know that the candidates recognize their responsibilities to implement the commitments under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.

Ensuring economic stability is a matter of urgency for the Government of Afghanistan. In order to achieve that goal, the new Government will have to immediately grapple with a variety of legislative and institutional reforms necessary for increasing annual revenue, reducing the rapidly expanding illicit economy and developing industry. We look forward to seeing tangible results before the ministerial meeting to be co-hosted by Afghanistan and the United Kingdom.

Furthermore, recognizing that reconciliation is the only way to achieve lasting peace in Afghanistan, the future Government must continue to call on the Taliban to join the peace process. Japan supports the Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. For the sake of lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan, continuous efforts by the country's leadership and the constructive engagement of neighbouring countries are indispensable. The increased dialogue between Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, including Pakistan, is encouraging in that regard.

Concerning the security situation, in 2013 we witnessed a sharp increase in insurgent attacks and civilian casualties. A further deterioration in the security situation will inevitably have a negative impact not only on Afghanistan's economic and social activities, but also on the implementation of our assistance. Security is also vital to encourage the full participation of all eligible voters, especially female voters, in the upcoming elections. One of the most crucial responsibilities of the Afghan Government is to continue building the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces and ensuring the necessary security arrangements, in close cooperation with its international partners.

Finally, let me say a few words on Japan's commitment to Afghanistan. Since January 2002, when we hosted the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan in Tokyo, we have contributed more than $5 billion to Afghanistan for its developments efforts. Japan's contribution covers a wide range of areas. For example, we have provided 30 per cent of the total salary of the Afghan National Police and have built or renovated more than 820 schools all over the country.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Japan's commitment to stand by the Government and people of Afghanistan in their endeavour for long-term stability.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union.

Mr. Mayr-Harting: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its States members. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I would first like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the situation in Afghanistan and its implicaitons for international peace and security (S/2014/163), as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing in the Council today.

The coming months and the upcoming elections will be critical for Afghanistan, as the country needs to safeguard the progress made over the past 12 years. That will be the platform from which it can then move towards the goal of self-sustainability. The United Nations has played a critical role in the progress made, and I would like to commend the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General personally for their continued support for the people of Afghanistan. The challenges have also been outlined in the statement by the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for which I would like to thank him.

Afghanistan will continue to depend upon financial assistance from the international community for some time. With the transition to full Afghan control to be completed by the end of this year and a reduced international presence, the role of UNAMA will be even more critical in ensuring the effective coordination of donor assistance. UNAMA has a vital role to play in enabling the Government of Afghanistan and the

international community to work together to fulfil the mutual commitments made at the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan in 2012.

The importance of strengthening and safeguarding the gains made on human rights, women's rights and the rule of law for the Afghan people cannot be overstated. While there have been real improvements in the lives of Afghan women and children, due to improvements seen in health and education, much more still needs to be done especially to implement the statutory protection for women's rights, in order to enable Afghan women to play a more substantial role in Afghan society. The European Union welcomes UNAMA's work in that regard, in fulfilment of its mandate, particularly in promoting the rights of women and children.

The upcoming elections are the most immediate priority in Afghanistan. The European Union condemns the recent killings of journalists in Afghanistan. Safety and security for the media is a crucial part of the elections and, indeed, of democracy. The elections offer the opportunity for the first democratic transfer of power in Afghanistan's history. The European Union welcomes the spirit in which the campaign has so far been conducted. Of course, much of the focus has been on the presidential election, but it is worth recalling that the provincial council elections are also vitally important to embedding democracy across the country. The European Union hopes that the successful candidates will better reflect the Afghan population, in particular that the number of women representatives will increase.

Following the invitation issued by Afghan authorities to the European Union to observe the 5 April elections, I am pleased to confirm that the European Union has already deployed an election assessment team. The team of 15 international experts is being led by Thijs Berman, a member of the European Parliament, and is based in Kabul.

The elections are vitally important, but they are also a further step on the longer journey of firmly establishing democracy in Afghanistan. Next year, there will be parliamentary elections, with further elections to follow in subsequent years. Viable and capable electoral institutions and infrastructure are a prerequisite for holding credible, inclusive, transparent and legitimate elections, now and in the future. In our view, therefore, the UNAMA mandate should include a clear commitment to continued political and technical support to elections in order to strengthen Afghan leadership and ownership of the electoral processes and to ensure that elections accurately reflect the will of the Afghan people.

We would like to conclude by reiterating that the international community should remain strongly committed to progress in Afghanistan for the long term. On our side, we will remain firmly focused on supporting the people of Afghanistan to help them achieve their aspirations. Our goal continues to be the emergence of a fully self-reliant, peaceful, democratic and prosperous society for the benefit of all Afghans.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

Mr. Ružička (Slovakia): Thank you very much, Madam President, for this opportunity to participate in the debate of the Security Council on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) . Let me assure you of my delegation's support for your leadership in our deliberations.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2014/163), and the Special Representative for his briefing. I believe this is an appropriate moment to express appreciation for the work of His Excellency Mr. Zahir Tanin in his relentless diplomatic efforts and wisdom in many areas contributing to better understanding and stability in Afghanistan.

Slovakia aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the observer of the European Union. In my national capacity, allow me to briefly make a few comments on some important elements of the current situation in Afghanistan with regard to the following challenges.

Overall security remains the most important precondition for continued development in Afghanistan — political, economic and cultural. In that regard, the Slovak Republic strongly condemns not only the attack on a restaurant in Kabul on 17 January, which took lives, including those of four members of the United Nations family in Afghanistan, but also all use of force and violence in any form against anyone. Once again, I would like to express my condolences to the families of all victims, as well as my appreciation for the work of UNAMA's staff.

I wish to reiterate the long-term commitment of the Slovak Republic to providing assistance and training

to the Afghan National Security Forces. I would also like to encourage the Afghan forces to continue in their transition at what the Secretary-General described in his report as a greater operational tempo, despite targeted attacks by anti-Government elements on Afghan forces.

The prevention and management of security challenges will be crucial, especially ahead of and during Afghanistan's national elections next month. In that regard, we fully support the calls of the Special Representative, Mr. Kubiš, on the Afghan authorities and the independent electoral bodies to ensure that the polls are credible, that any concerns are voiced prior to the elections and that the level of transparency is as high as possible.

We would like to express our appreciation for the efforts of the Afghan authorities with regard to the preparations for the upcoming elections, which remain on track for the scheduled polling date of 5 April. We hope that all candidates and election workers will be able to perform their duties in the run-up to the elections without being threatened by those who seek to disrupt the firm will of the Afghan people to live peacefully in their country and to choose their own destiny and political leaders. The right of all Afghans to enjoy freedom and basic human rights, privileges and responsibilities should be protected and fought for.

We are pleased at the increasing participation of women in the transition process. The Commission on the Status of Women, which concluded its fifty-eighth session a few days ago, was enriched by a number of side events. Of those, I would like to note the event organized by my colleague, Ambassador Jarmo Viinanen of Finland, on 12 March.

On that occasion, we had the opportunity to welcome a group of politically active Afghan women, led by Afghan Deputy Minister for Women's Affairs Her Excellency Mrs. Fawzia Habibi. For those who cast doubt on the progress achieved in Afghanistan, such a workshop on security and the role of women, with the active participation of prominent Afghan representatives in New York, would have been unthinkable 13 years ago. Let me also express my appreciation of the fact that the Ministry of the Interior of Afghanistan continues to take steps to better protect and to empower female police and Ministry staff in fulfilment of its goal of recruiting and training a total of 10,000 female officers.

The progress mentioned has, to a great extent, been achieved with the assistance, performance and outreach of UNAMA. We note and highly appreciate not only internal activities assisting the Afghan authorities in the transition but also the regional outreach of UNAMA. It proves that the Mission pays the necessity attention to promoting fruitful collaboration among all countries of the region in facing threats that surpass their individual capacities. That approach is important, especially in fighting terrorism, cross-border trafficking and illegal trade. The Slovak Republic therefore supports the renewal of UNAMA's mandate with today's unanimous vote.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the people of Afghanistan on the upcoming Nowruz holiday.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Sahebzada Ahmed Khan (Pakistan): Allow me begin by expressing my heartfelt condolences to the people and the Government of Afghanistan on the demise of Vice-President Mohammad Qasim Fahim. His invaluable contribution to the peace, prosperity and stability of Afghanistan will long be remembered. Pakistan also condemns the 17 January terrorist attack in Kabul, and we express our sympathies and condolences.

We thank Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his effective leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and for his comprehensive briefing this morning. His visit to Pakistan last month provided an opportunity for a frank exchange of views, which we truly appreciate.

Pakistan strongly feels that UNAMA is a stabilizing factor in Afghanistan. Its continued role therefore remains crucial. We also welcome the adoption of resolution 2145 (2014) this morning. We thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for sharing his perspective with us. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/163), which provides an overview of developments in the region, and thank Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his positive evaluation of Pakistan with regard to bilateral relations.

As we celebrate Nowruz and a new beginning, the season of change is upon us in more than one way. In a little under three weeks, Afghans will go to the polls to exercise their democratic right. Timely, inclusive, transparent and credible elections are critical to the

continued stability of the country. We are encouraged by the Secretary-General's assessment that preparations are going well. We hope that the remaining challenges will also be addressed.

Pakistan, for its part, has no favourites. It will cooperate and work with the popular choice of our Afghan brothers and sisters. Others should also exercise such neutrality. A regional consensus on non-interference is therefore required. Let me also reassure Afghanistan that Pakistan remains committed to strengthening security along the border during the electoral process.

Elections are only the first challenge this year. Security and economic transformations also need to be carefully managed. The post-2014 Afghanistan remains critical to international and regional peace and security. It should therefore never be abandoned. An inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process is central to sustained stability. It needs to be expedited and pursued with persistence and perseverance. Our support for the process is unwavering. Our work remains primarily an Afghan-led process. We can at best encourage and facilitate that.

Pakistan feels that terrorists and extremists should not be allowed to influence relations, policies and decisions. Securing the Pakistan-Afghanistan border through consistent vigilance and effective management is therefore a necessity, and the strengthening of border controls a priority. The activation of the Joint Commission on Border Management in early February is a positive step. We hope that it will facilitate real-time communication and improve security on the ground.

Increased opium production in Afghanistan and the growing adverse impact of drugs on Afghans themselves, as well as the link between drugs and terrorism, are well established. The role of the international community, led by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UNAMA, remains imperative to countering that threat.

Another issue of concern are the 3 million Afghan refugees who are still in Pakistan. The economic prospects outlined in the Secretary-General's report are not rosy. Without improving economic conditions, sustainable repatriation and reintegration will be very difficult. While we have extended the stay of refugees until the end of the year, a comprehensive plan for their return home needs to be drawn up.

Frequent high-level exchanges and the growing emphasis on bilateral trade, economic cooperation and regional collaboration represent Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's forward-looking vision of a peaceful and prosperous neighbourhood. The Turkey-Afghanistan-Pakistan trilateral summit last month, the fullest summit-level interaction between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the past eight months, continued that momentum. The meeting of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint Economic Commission in February was another important milestone in that regard. Coupled with contacts in the security and intelligence fields, such exchanges have created a real momentum, and we hope to continue building on that impetus.

Our multidimensional relationship is not restricted to official visits. People-to-people contacts are also growing. Afghan students are studying in Pakistani institutions, laying the foundation for a brighter, collaborative future.

Let me conclude by quoting Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Ankara. He said,

> "Afghanistan today is at a defining moment in its history. This is a time for all Afghans to come together, make peace and rebuild their country."

We are with them on that road.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Grunditz (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and my own country, Sweden. We fully support the statement by the observer of European Union but would like to add a few remarks.

We, too, would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2014/163), and the Special Representative for his briefing. I also thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

The upcoming elections will, if successful, be the first democratic and peaceful transfer of power in Afghanistan's history. Their importance for the consolidation of Afghanistan's democracy cannot be overstated. We commend the Government for the progress made in preparing for the elections and for creating the space for a lively and meaningful debate about Afghanistan's future. The task now is to ensure that the elections are credible, inclusive and transparent. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

(UNAMA) has an important support function, as it does for the 2015 parliamentary elections as well.

Afghanistan has made real progress over the past decade in areas such as education, health and infrastructure. It is imperative that the momentum of progress be sustained in order for Afghanistan to emerge stronger and more self-reliant. The achievements made so far need to be safeguarded. UNAMA has a vital role to play in ensuring that the partnership between Afghanistan and the international community under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework is realized to its full extent.

Only an inclusive political solution can secure stability in the country. We fully back the continuation of UNAMA's good offices to support an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process. A continuing political role for the United Nations in Afghanistan, coupling political engagement and effective donor coordination, will also be important after 2014, not least for the development efforts that remain ahead. We underline the importance of a continued local and regional field presence and adequate financing for the Mission.

UNAMA has an important role in promoting Government engagement and donor coordination. There is also a need for strengthened coordination across United Nations agencies present in Afghanistan, thereby promoting the concept of the United Nations delivering as one. As more donors channel their funding through United Nations financing mechanisms, that role becomes increasingly vital.

For several of the Nordic countries, Afghanistan is already their largest bilateral development cooperation partner. The foundation for that is the strong domestic political and popular support in the countries concerned. Our Governments and national parliaments consider human rights, in particular women's rights, a core issue when deciding on future financial and political support to Afghanistan. It is important that the Afghan political leadership show firm commitment in promoting women's rights, tackling corruption and safeguarding the well-being of its people. Issues such as the full implementation of the law on the elimination of violence against women, continued efforts to increase safe and secure access to quality education for women and girls, and guarantees for their equal political participation in decision-making will remain crucial.

Freedom of the media is particularly important in the context of both the upcoming elections and the building of a free, open and transparent society. Progress has been achieved, but threats remain towards the media. That was recently highlighted by the horrible assassination of the Swedish journalist Nils Horner in Kabul and by recent cases of violence against reporters in Mazar-e-Sharif.

The humanitarian situation remains a cause for concern, not least with regard to health and the increasing numbers of displaced persons. All efforts must be made to ensure humanitarian access. Further attacks against humanitarian personnel are unacceptable. We welcome efforts to improve humanitarian coordination and the establishment of a common humanitarian fund. We would like to encourage more donors to channel funding through the United Nations pooled funds.

In conclusion, the Nordic countries acknowledge the Afghan Government's efforts to take its commitments forward. We encourage the Government to continue its demanding work and to push forward during the upcoming elections. Benchmarks are not only factors in building the confidence of the international community; they are vital above all in building a more democratic, prosperous and stable Afghanistan for all its citizens.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, and I take this opportunity to welcome the new Permanent Representative of Germany.

Mr. Braun (Germany): To start, let me thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2014/163), and his Special Representative, Mr. Ján Kubiš, for his briefing and for his availability for other functions during his time in New York. I also acknowledge Ambassador Tanin's presence in the Security Council today.

The German Government aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of European Union earlier in today's debate.

In three weeks' time, the Afghan people will elect a new president and provincial councils. For the first time in Afghanistan's history, power will be peacefully transferred to a new Administration. We commend the great efforts Afghanistan has made so far in the preparations for those elections. My Government is confident that free, fair and transparent elections will result in a legitimate outcome, thereby

further strengthening democracy in Afghanistan. We encourage the Afghan people, particularly women, to make full use of their constitutional rights and to actively participate in the elections.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has played a crucial role in support of preparations for the elections, contributing to building the capacities of Afghan authorities. For that reason, we see a continuing role for UNAMA in that area, pursuant to the Mission's mandate just extended by the Council.

However, with our shared focus on the elections, we must not forget that there are many other challenges lying ahead in Afghanistan. Preserving and consolidating gains in the protection and promotion of human rights is of the utmost urgency. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission remains a key partner in that regard. It is also of great importance to ensure the equal participation of all members of society, in particular women, in the shaping of the country and in its institution-building.

The security situation remains volatile. The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) have proven increasingly capable of responding to security challenges, although at a high cost. Continued support by the international community through the transition period and beyond would further strengthen the ANSF's capacities to provide security for all Afghans. As previously stated, Germany stands ready to contribute its share to that joint effort. To that end, the timely signing of the bilateral security agreement between Afghanistan and the United States is a necessary precondition and should not be delayed further.

At this critical juncture, Afghanistan needs to see continuity in the work of the United Nations on the ground. Supporting the Afghan Government's efforts to protect and promote human rights, increase coordination and efficiency of international support and implement its commitments under the Tokyo Framework requires a strong United Nations Mission with adequate resources and a presence throughout the country. We therefore welcome the extension of UNAMA's mandate for another 12 months.

To conclude, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and admiration for the work of the Special Representative and his team in Afghanistan. We are still mourning the death of four United Nations staff who died on 17 January in a heinous attack in Kabul. Under such difficult circumstances, the United Nations continues to do great work in the service of the Afghan people. Germany will continue to extend its support to UNAMA in fulfilling its mandate.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Eler (Turkey): I would like to begin my statement by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his comprehensive briefing. I would also like to extend my condolences to the Afghan people on the passing of First Vice-President Mohammed Qasim Fahim, an exemplary Afghan leader who was known for his conciliatory approach and bridge-building capabilities.

Afghanistan stands at a crucial crossroads, with key political, security and economic transformation processes under way. The coming months, especially after the 5 April presidential and provincial elections, will have an enormous impact on the way in which the next decade will unfold.

Resolution 2145 (2014), on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), arrives at a timely moment, when change and uncertainty dominate the Afghanistan agenda. Maintaining the comprehensive UNAMA mandate will provide tangible assurance of the United Nations continued assistance to the Afghan Government and people. We believe that Afghanistan's future should be based on a conscious strategy drawing strength from local ownership and seeking to pull together various efforts into a meaningful whole. That understanding is fully reflected in the resolution.

Despite significant improvements in health, education, development, infrastructure and human rights, Afghanistan will continue to need the support of the international community for many years to come.

Security, accessibility and inclusiveness will be the three grave challenges of the upcoming elections. Following the elections, security threats are likely to continue and even increase in the short run. Meanwhile, good governance, aid transparency and combating corruption will need to be prioritized, in line with the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, while agreements on legal frameworks to define the nature of the international community's military assistance will need to be drawn up. The tasks that the newly elected Government will face are daunting in nature.

At this vital juncture, the international community should continue investing in positive scenarios for the future of the country. In the short run, that entails the successful conduct of the April elections and the preservation of the current level of security. More crucially, perceptions of a power vacuum that could be filled by terrorist or organized crime groups must be broken. International support to capacity-building and good governance must continue. In addition, we must continue to support responses to the humanitarian challenges faced.

We fully support the human rights mandate of UNAMA. Addressing matters involving grave human rights violations, particularly violence against women and girls, and the issue of civilian casualties should be prioritized, in both the short- and the long-term. Local ownership of human rights matters is essential to ensuring durable solutions in that area.

As the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place last week, I would like to extend my great appreciation to the Afghan officials and human rights defenders who face daily threats and challenges in their work to enhance the human rights of Afghan women and girls.

There is heightened awareness of Afghanistan's problems among its regional partners, as well as increased ownership. The Istanbul Process maintains a comprehensive regional approach on integrating Afghanistan into the region and facing regional challenges as a whole, and therefore reflects that spirit. We look forward to the next Istanbul Process ministerial meeting in China. We also continue to support all trilateral, quadrilateral and multilateral initiatives aimed at the well-being of the Afghan people. In that context, the most recent trilateral dialogue among Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey that took place on 12 and 13 February, in Ankara, has been useful and successful.

In conclusion, I would like to voice our strong support of the crucial role that the United Nations will continue to play during and post transition. Our commitment to the needs of the United Nations regarding Afghanistan will serve as insurance in protecting the achievements of the past 13 years on the ground.

I would particularly like to commend the valuable efforts of the United Nations and of UNAMA, which should be supported with sufficient means and resources.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt condolences to the families and colleagues of all victims of the heinous terrorist attack in Kabul in January, among which there were UNAMA personnel who lost their lives working for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Turkey will remain in solidarity with the Afghan people and will continue to contribute to a safe, secure and prosperous Afghanistan, as we have done for many decades.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to start by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his briefing and comprehensive report on the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and for his analysis of the current situation in Afghanistan. I also thank Ambassador Tanin for his informative statement. I express my thanks to the Secretary-General for the report contained in document S/2014/163. I would like briefly to touch upon a few points regarding the prevailing situation in Afghanistan.

First, this year Afghanistan is approaching a critical moment in its history. The upcoming elections, the security and political issues associated with the transfer of power and the end of the presence of the international forces will all culminate during the coming months. We hope that the combined efforts of the Afghan Government and the United Nations will lead the process to improved durability and the strengthening of peace, stability and security in Afghanistan and the region.

Secondly, as a neighbouring country of Afghanistan, we share a critical interest in Afghanistan's security and long-term stability and its socioeconomic development. Afghanistan's continuing engagements with its neighbours and regional partners in the areas of trade, economic exchange and development projects must be supported and strengthened. Such economic ties work to cement stability in Afghanistan and in the region. In that regard, our continuing bilateral cooperation is particularly focused on security matters, counter-narcotics efforts, development projects and economic cooperation aimed at infrastructure areas involving roads, railroads, energy, mining and minerals and agriculture, among others.

Thirdly, as the drawdown of the international military forces is on this year's agenda, there are some security concerns involved. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General, the United Nations recorded 20,093 security incidents in Afghanistan in 2013 — a 14 per cent increase in casualties inflicted upon Afghan civilians and a reversal of the decline recorded in 2012. A portion of those were caused by the military operations of the international forces in Afghanistan. Attacks on civilians under any pretext and by whomever is condemnable and must be halted.

Fourthly, regarding the return of refugees, we look forward to the full implementation of the relevant agreements between the Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations of 31 March 2013, aimed at setting up a team to seek joint solutions and integrated approaches to refugees. We urge the international community to strengthen and expedite efforts to create the conditions conducive for the sustainable repatriation of refugees and their full rehabilitation and reintegration into their homeland.

Fifthly, with respect to the counter-narcotics efforts, we are concerned about the possible increase in opium poppy cultivation, particularly in the north and north-east areas of Afghanistan. We welcome the initiative taken by the Afghan Minister of Counter Narcotics to organize a Good Neighbourly Relations Declaration conference in Kabul on 28 and 29 January, with the participation of ministers or heads of counter-narcotics institutions from China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. We hope that, with the strong support and commitment of international donors, Afghan authorities and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the menace of drug cultivation and drug trafficking, a main source of income for extremist and terrorist groups, will be curtailed to a great extent.

Sixthly, we support UNAMA, as well as United Nations agencies, in fulfilling their mission to provide assistance to the peace, stability and reconstruction of Afghanistan through a robust regional engagement on issues such as border security, immigration, the return of refugees and drug control measures. The role of UNAMA should be further strengthened in the light of the developments expected in Afghanistan this year. The future role of the United Nations in Afghanistan is going to grow and become more multifaceted, and sometimes much more complicated. We therefore regret the recent decision of the General Assembly to reduce its 2013 budget for UNAMA by $4.9 million. As indicated during recent visits of Mr. Kubiš to Tehran, we are, as always, ready to support UNAMA and steadfast in our support for the Mission and its activities.

I would like to join other speakers who congratulated Afghanistan and the Afghan people on the occasion of Nowruz, the day that has been recognized by the General Assembly as the International Day of Nowruz since 2009. I wish Afghanistan a New Year filled with peace and prosperity.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Grant (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to express my appreciation for the opportunity to address the Security Council.

This year, Afghanistan will witness a number of significant milestones — ones that will involve Afghans taking on a greater responsibility for the future direction of their country, as well as ones that will address the vital needs of democratization, security and peace.

On 5 April, Afghan citizens will exercise their right to elect the next Afghan President and the members of provincial councils. That historic day will mark Afghanistan's first democratic transition of power from one presidential leader to another. Over the past year, Afghanistan put into place a robust legislative framework, national institutions and local machinery to conduct credible, constitutional and inclusive elections. We welcome the efforts of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and the Ministry of the Interior, who have identified and addressed numerous security challenges to help ensure that all Afghans are able to participate in the elections. We are especially interested to see the success of measures that facilitate the enhanced participation of women. Canada is encouraged by the number of women voters registered thus far, and further calls on all Afghan citizens, Government officials, civil society organizations and the international community to increase their efforts to ensure the meaningful participation of women in all aspects of the electoral process leading to the elections of 5 April.

(*spoke in English*)

Since 2011, the Government of Afghanistan, with the assistance of the international community, has built a strong and capable Afghan National Security Forces that now leads security operations throughout the country. By 31 December 2014, those forces will have full responsibility for the security of Afghanistan,

as the International Security Assistance Force mission draws to an end. We can expect that the growing capability of those forces will be tested in the coming months by a determined insurgency. Nevertheless, with each passing day, Afghans are increasing their confidence in their security forces. Those outside of the political process should come to recognize that their future, their safety and security, and the future of Afghanistan, lies within a peace and reconciliation process. Canada is proud of the contribution we have made — and continue to make — in strengthening the ANSF. We call upon the Government of Afghanistan to sign without delay the requisite Afghanistan-United States bilateral security agreement and conclude the NATO-Afghanistan status-of-forces agreement to allow the international community to continue its military assistance to Afghanistan.

While Canada's military mission has ended, Canadian support to Afghanistan has not. Indeed, Canada has committed $227 million in development assistance for 2014 to 2017, to maintain the hard-fought gains for women and girls through support for improved health, education, humanitarian assistance and human rights. In addition, Canada remains committed to the safety and security of Afghanistan through continued support to sustain the Afghan National Security Forces with $330 million between 2015 and 2017.

Afghans themselves know that much remains to be done to improve the protection of human rights in their country. We note that the Government of Afghanistan recently released its report on the implementation of the elimination of violence against women law. Although that report satisfies one of the obligations under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, it also illustrates the startling reality that violence against women remains pervasive throughout Afghanistan. Canada has made enhancing human rights protections and empowering Afghan women and girls the focus of its development assistance for 2014 to 2017 and the priority in our relations with Afghanistan. We call upon the Government of Afghanistan to fully implement the elimination of violence against women law, and make every effort to guarantee the participation of women in all facets of Afghan life, be it in the security, political, economic or cultural domains. Canada stresses that all Afghan laws must ensure strong protections for women and girls, as guaranteed by the Afghan Constitution and in line with Afghanistan's international commitments to protect human rights, particularly protecting Afghan women and girls from sexual and domestic violence and child early and forced marriage. Afghanistan's full potential cannot, and will not, be achieved without the full participation of all of its citizens.

Afghans also want an end to Government corruption. We see the vibrant youth and civil society movements in Afghanistan — over half of the population is under 25 years old — and we can see their appetite for change, for jobs, for an end to corruption and for a chance to compete in the regional and global economy. The Afghan Government must do more to combat corruption by becoming more accountable to its people and to international donors. Canada encourages the Government of Afghanistan to meet the benchmarks set out by the International Monetary Fund and to pass new laws to address the corruption that is eroding the public's trust at all levels of Government. If the international community is to continue its special level of engagement with Afghanistan, it will also need to be confident that tangible results are being achieved in the fight against Government corruption. Action on that front will also help generate the investor interest needed to grow and sustain the Afghan economy. Passing a minerals law that is in line with international standards would send a clear signal to the world's investors that Afghanistan is genuinely open for business.

In conclusion, Canada remains committed to helping Afghanistan become a more peaceful and prosperous country in the heart of Asia, one that is able to benefit from the vast economic opportunities available. In that vein, we emphasize that networks of terrorists deployed from neighbouring States must be held accountable, as must their supporters. Reconciliation that fails to enshrine the indispensable rights of women, advance a constitutional democracy or tackle endemic corruption is not reconciliation. The road to peace is fraught with perils and pitfalls, but it is increasingly one on which Afghans will lead the charge.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.